Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System

The Dynamic Learning Maps™ Alternate Assessment System (DLM™) is an instructionally relevant system that supports student learning and measures what students with significant cognitive disabilities know and can do. The system uses the DLM Essential Elements to support the design of individualized experiences for each student by presenting questions and tasks that are appropriate for a student's needs and abilities.

Content

The Dynamic Learning Maps system features large, fine-grained learning maps to support student learning. The maps feature multiple pathways toward the development of academic knowledge and understanding. Nodes in the learning map represent specific knowledge, skills, and understandings along the pathways. The DLM system includes nodes for English language arts and mathematics, as well as nodes that are foundational to the development of academic knowledge in both subjects.

Embedded within the learning maps are Essential Elements (EEs), which are challenging, grade-level learning targets. The DLM Essential Elements are specific statements of the content and skills students with significant cognitive disabilities are expected to know and be able to do in English language arts and mathematics. The DLM Essential Elements are intended to provide links between the general education content standards and grade-specific expectations.

Assessments

DLM assessment items are grouped together in testlets that assess one or more Essential Elements. Each testlet contains 3-8 items and an engagement activity. Testlets are built on research-based learning maps that show the relationships between the knowledge and skills that are necessary to reach the EEs. Items are aligned to nodes in the learning map. There are two types of testlets in the DLM system:

- Most testlets are designed for direct student interaction via computer, using special devices such as alternate keyboards, touch screens, or switches. Most items are multiple choice format. Technology-enhanced items are used on a limited basis for items that require certain types of skills, such as sorting or matching.

- Some testlets are designed for administration by the test administrator, outside the system, with the test administrator recording responses in the system, rather than the student recording his or her own responses.

In instructionally embedded assessments given throughout the year, the educator is able to select the appropriate EEs for a student and the level within each EE (five levels of assessment are available for each Essential Element allowing the appropriate and accurate measurement of students operating from the pre-intentional and pre-symbolic levels up to students meeting and exceeding grade level targets), after reviewing the recommendations from the system. The educator makes those choices, then instructs on that content before administering the assessment. The system uses the student's assessment results to help refine the system's recommendations. In the year-end assessment, the

student is automatically routed to the most appropriate level of the EEs tested after initial placement and subsequent student performance.

Accessibility

Having accessible content is essential to the success of the student. DLM has integrated accessible content by developing various testlet levels for each Essential Element, using grade-appropriate core vocabulary, supporting growth through multiple and alternate pathways through the nodes, and following item writing guidelines designed to prevent barriers to access. The system uses information about the student, including prior academic achievement, expressive and receptive communication, and previous DLM assessment results, to determine where the student should start his or her first DLM assessment.

Accessibility is also supported through the Personal Needs and Preferences (PNP) profile. Each student's IEP team decides which tools and supports should be provided. The teacher records these choices in the system and the student's assessment experience is customized based on those tools and supports.

Technology

DLM assessments can be delivered on PC or Mac desktops or laptops, iPads, or with other devices attached to computers such as interactive whiteboards. Tests are delivered using KITE®, which is a customized, secure web browser that is downloaded onto the device. Educator Portal (EP) is the website where teachers manage student data, create instructional plans, retrieve test assignment information and score reports, and manage their own completion of DLM professional development and required training.

Professional Development

The DLM system includes professional development to support instruction. Modules are offered in a self-directed format, which allows teachers to complete them independently on a flexible schedule; and in a facilitated format, which allows for group delivery. Each module concludes with a quiz.

The DLM System in 2014-15

DLM will deliver an operational assessment in spring 2015, with scores that states can use for accountability purposes. There will also be operational instructionally embedded assessments available for much of the year. DLM will continue field testing additional testlets in the fall and winter. For 2015-16, instructionally embedded assessment will be available fall through early spring and the spring 2016 assessment will be very similar to the spring 2015 assessment.

A full 2014-15 calendar will be released in mid-July. A few key dates are provided below:

Tentative Dates	Event
Summer 2014	
August 7	Updated version of KITE client available for download
August 18	Required test administrator training available
	Data file layouts and file upload templates available for student enrollment and rostering
	Self-directed professional development modules available through Educator Portal

Tentative Dates	Event
Fall 2014	
Early September	Training webinars for district staff
September 17	Final versions of manuals available
October 1	Deadline for student enrollment for fall field test
October 1-10	Data validation/revision window #1 (preparation for field/operational testing)
October 13 - 31	Phase A Field Testing
November 10 – December 20	Phase B Field Testing and Operational instructionally embedded assessments available
Winter 2014-15	
January 5 – March 13	Phase C Field Testing and Operational instructionally embedded assessments available
February 23 – March 13	Data validation/revision window #2 (preparation for operational spring window)
Spring 2015	
March 16 – June 12	Consortium operational spring window (State windows individualized within)
Summer 2015	
June-July	Standard setting Score files and score reports sent to states

For More Information

DLM will re-launch its website August 1. Most resources to support implementation of DLM in 2014-15 will become available between mid-August and mid-September. In the meantime, here are some resources for those who would like to learn more before August:

- The DLM™ Essential Elements are located at
  http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/moreinfo/essential_elements/index.html
- Information about professional development modules and the virtual community of practice are currently located at http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/unc/facilitated/index.html.[1] Teachers who are new to DLM may find these foundational modules especially helpful:
  - o DLM Claims and Conceptual Areas
  - o DLM Essential Elements
  - o Individual Education Programs Linked to the DLM Essential Elements
  - o Universal Design for Learning
- A few educator resources that were available for Field Test #3 in spring 2014 are still on the DLM website at
  http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/moreinfo/field_testing/educator_resource_page_3.html.
  These resources include videos describing DLM testlets, examples of Essential Elements and nodes that were assessed, and a guide to practice activities and released testlets.

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[1] Beginning August 18, self-directed professional development and required test administrator training will be available in Educator Portal.